

Washington, DC - Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) in a speech on the House floor last night, called for the resignation of the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, over continued failures in Iraq, most recently the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib, a U.S. Military prison. Blumenauer argued that Rumsfeld has repeatedly dismissed concerns of Congress on a number of critical issues, appears to be uninformed about what is happening in Iraq and shows a lack of respect for the international community.

"Only when the truth behind the administration's contradictions and misinformation is exposed does this administration acknowledge problems," said Blumenauer. "The most recent example is the abuse of Iraqi prisoners. As an American I am ashamed and disgusted by the horrendous acts at Abu Ghraib prison, caught in pictures and displayed around the world. The impact of these images is devastating, precisely in the part of the world where we are already struggling to counter the widespread impression that we don't respect the Arab world. It has jeopardized the security not only of our troops, but of Americans around the world.

"I have listened repeatedly to the Secretary brush aside penetrating questions from Members of Congress about both his policies and their execution. The Congress continues to find out more information about what is going on in Iraq from reporters than from the administration. It is becoming more and more likely that the reason that Secretary Rumsfeld and his team have not been forthcoming is that they simply do not know what is going on.

"Rumsfeld needs to take responsibility for continued missteps and misinformation from the supposed premise for going to war in Iraq, the costs of the war, and the reality of what is happening on the ground in Iraq that is putting at grave risk our fighting men and women and civilian workers. The firing or resignation of Rumsfeld would be the best signal this administration could give that it is serious about repairing the damage it has done to our international credibility."

In addition to Rumsfeld's resignation Blumenauer called for opening our Iraqi prisons to independent third party monitoring by the United Nations and the International Red Cross; a halt to using private contractors for functions that should be under the direct control and supervision of U.S. military uniformed command; and, for Congress to fulfill its oversight responsibility with hearings and congressional investigations.